



GRIZZLY GOUGE

OFFICIAL REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5 NEWSLETTER
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The SITREP

July was both a busy month and a time for some rest and relaxation for the Marines and Sailors of Regimental Combat Team 5. After completing Enhanced Mohave Viper aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif. in June, members of the RCT were glad to spend most of July back at San Mateo on predeployment block leave.

This approximately three week period gave RCT-5 Marines and Sailors a chance to spend some much needed time off with family, friends and loved ones whom they are sure to miss over the next year.

After leave it was back to work for RCT-5. The final week of July was spent fine-tuning their pre-deployment checklists. Gear inspections were conducted, weapons were drawn and cleaned at the armory and final predeployment training courses were completed.

Gear inspections are an essential part of pre-deployment planning. From mission essential gear like



Photo by Lance Cpl. Ammon Carter
MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - U.S. Marine 1st Lt. Kyle Pubols and 1st Lt. Jayson Downing (background) stand at attention during a promotion ceremony at the 5th Marine Regiment command post here July 1.

Kevlar helmets and magazines to personal items like hygiene kits, gear lists are deliberately put together in order to ensure that each member of RCT-5 has the right equipment to effectively execute his or her assigned duties while deployed.

Weapons cleaning and accountability was another important part of this final week in July. Ensuring everyone has the appropriate weapons and auxiliary gear is only one part of the process. A periodic, thorough cleaning of each personal weapon ensures they will be functioning properly when RCT-5 Marines and Sailors need them the most. Though this evolution took a substantial amount of time, its importance cannot be overstated.

In addition to the gear and weapons inspections, Marines and Sailors spent the remainder of this last week in July completing their final predeployment training courses. These courses included combat lifesaving, physical fitness, nutrition, and cultural and language classes focusing on the region of Afghanistan to which the RCT is deploying. These courses ensure the members of RCT-5 stay mentally sharp and focused on their mission in the weeks leading up to deployment.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Ammon Carter
MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - U.S. Marine Maj. Eric Landblom and his family pose for a photo during a promotion ceremony at the 5th Marine Regiment command post here July 1.

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Marine, Mullah partnership contributes to counterinsurgency fight

Story by Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan — In hopes of countering insurgent dogma and improving local infrastructure, coalition forces have recently begun engaging local religious leaders to rally support for coalition forces and developmental projects in the district.

“We’re engaging mullahs to bridge to the local communities in a different way,” said Capt. Daniel Petronzio, the officer-in-charge of 1/3’s Embedded Training Team and a native of Beverly, Mass. “It shows our openness to religion ...”

A mullah fills a combination of religious and social roles in Islamic society. He leads community prayers, teaches from the Qur’an and orchestrates ceremonies for births and funerals. Essentially, a mullah helps Muslims apply the Qur’an to their daily lives – a role that is especially important here, where much of the population is illiterate.

The Afghan government and coalition forces are working with local mullahs on several initiatives, including the reconstruction of mosques, which addresses the community’s cultural needs, and hiring of local apprentices for the reconstruction, which helps the local economy and hurts insurgent recruitment.

“--Working with the mullahs to employ local people counters the need for younger men to go to insurgent forces to make money for their families,” explained Petronzio.

Coalition forces and the Afghan government are also working with the mullahs to drive the reintegration program, which helps disaffected insurgents to rejoin Afghan society.

Mullah shuras, the Pashto term



Photo by Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Navy Lt. Carl Rhoads enjoys a cup of chai tea during a shura with local mullahs here, July 23. Rhoads, a native of Weippe, Idaho, is the battalion chaplain for 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. The shura was held to connect with local mullahs in Garmsir and find out different ways to support the local community.

for meeting, have been held in five different areas of Garmsir. In most cases, the mullahs initially expressed suspicion that coalition forces intend to change their religion, but came away from the meetings with a new perspective.

“As a battalion, we were looking for a way to express to the local population that we were not against religion or against Islam,” said Capt. Michael Kline, the staff judge advocate for 1/3 and native of Burke, Va. “We were finding that one of their largest concerns was that the Marines were here to wipe out Islam. To us, that seems like a ridiculous notion, but to the local people, it was a real fear.”

“Personally, it has been a very eye-opening experience with these mullahs,” added Kline. “When I tell them many of the Marines do believe in God and that Marines and ANA are here to provide peace and security and not change their religion, they’re often very surprised

and excited. Just having that small interaction helps them see us as people. Letting them know we understand how important religion is to them and we respect their beliefs has been crucial in helping them understand the government of Afghanistan and Marines are here to make Garmsir a better, safer place.”

Editor’s Note:

The battalion supports Regimental Combat Team 1, under 2nd Marine Division (Forward), which serves as the ground combat element in Helmand. The mission of the division is to partner with Afghan National Security Forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations to secure the Afghan people, defeat insurgent forces, and enable ANSF to assume security responsibilities in the region. Ultimately, the partnered forces promote the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.

Helmand Marines loosen reigns on local soldiers

Story by Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan — Punching bags and jump rope help, but you don't really learn how to fight until you set foot in the ring.

This is the philosophy that shapes Marines' interaction with Afghan National Army soldiers here. While past units essentially told the ANA what to do, the Marines of 2nd Squad, Weapons Platoon are helping them find their own way forward.

"The ANA soldiers have so much more to contribute than being extra Marines," said, 1st Lt. Charles Eberly, the platoon commander of Weapons Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. "The more I interact with the people here, the more I realize how essential they are. We are kind of outsiders, but the soldiers are part of the human network here. They know everybody, and they can



Photo by Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Sgt. Nathaniel McGinness sights in on suspicious activity during a security patrol here, July 1. McGinness, a native of Omaha, Neb., is the squad leader of 2nd Squad. The ANA soldiers partnered with 2nd Squad have taken on independent responsibility of the operations in their area to include sweeping for improvised explosive devices and taking part in the planning of the patrols in the area.

walk out on any street and communicate effectively."

In early June, Eberly, decided to give the ANA soldiers from 2nd Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps greater responsi-

bility. Eberly, from Albuquerque, N.M., combined soldiers from two different ANA positions to make a complete squad. For about a week, the Marines of 2nd Squad continued to walk them through daily operations. Then, they loosened the reigns, so to speak.

Before the mini transition, Sgt. Nathaniel McGinness, the squad leader of 2nd Squad, headed every patrol and wrote each watch roster for the ANA and Marines. Now, he splits these tasks with ANA Sgt. Sayed Akbar, a 2nd Kandak squad leader. And, instead of having Marines on point every time, the ANA soldiers now lead, sweeping for improved explosive devices.

"We are teaching ... a mentality that will make them successful in the future," said McGinness, a native of Omaha, Neb.

The Marines of 2nd Squad have handed the initiative to their Afghan counterparts, and along with that initiative, the ANA soldiers have developed a newfound sense of responsibility and pride.



Photo by Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - An Afghanistan National Army soldier with the 2nd Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps provides security during a momentary halt during a security patrol here, July 1. The ANA soldiers partnered with 2nd Squad have taken on independent responsibility of the operations in their area to include sweeping for improvised explosive devices and taking part in the planning of the patrols in the area.

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"I like my job of providing security of this area," said Akbar. "After the new improvements, I'm confident my children and my children's children will be able to go to school and continue to build upon Afghanistan."

Local citizens have taken notice of the ANA's increased role. After the ANA squad led their first patrol in late June, local elders mentioned it during a shura the following Sunday.

"The local people are looking to the ANA to hold security," said Lance Cpl. Joshua Greene, a team leader with 2nd Squad and a native of Gainesville, Fla. "For example, if I was back home, I would want my own cops patrolling the streets, not a foreign country's."

More recently, 2nd Squad went on a satellite patrol with the ANA squad. The Afghan soldiers, who outnumbered the Marines 2 to 1, led the patrol and planned their own route. The Marines simply observed how the soldiers operated and providing advice when necessary.

According to McGinness, the local ANA's progress is an encouraging sign.

"The ANA soldiers have good intentions and have a patriotic drive to serve their country," said McGinness. "We're here to set the military example for them and steer them in the right direction, so they can be independently successful."

ATTENTION RCT-5 FAMILY AND FRIENDS!!!

**Here is the official RCT-5
mailing address of your
Marine or Sailor:**

Service member's name/rank
RCT-5 DET A Unit 40306
FPO AP 96427-0306

A letter from the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group



Dear 5th Marines Family:

The Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group is here for YOU! Many of you already know of our existence, but for those of you who don't, the City of Dana Point adopted the 5th Marine Regiment in 2004. We are fortunate to have you as our Adoptive Unit, but with this honor and distinction goes an enormous amount of responsibility and commitment. Our mission is simple, to provide Support and Outreach to the 5th Marines & Sailors when deployed, and to take care of your families living in the Camp Pendleton area.

Please contact your FRO, Kim Merkel at (telephone number), or our support organization, supportmarines@cox.net, for additional information. In the meantime, please check our website, www.danapoint5thmarines.com, for upcoming events. The City of Dana Point has a full calendar of events that can be enjoyed by both our single Marines and our Marines with families. You are now part of our Dana Point family.

Semper Fi,
Terry Rifkin
Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group
Director of Support and Outreach

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The Grizzly Gouge will continue to keep you informed on the actions and operations of RCT-5 Marines and Sailors while they are deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The next time you receive a Grizzly Gouge, RCT-5 will have boots on the ground in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Shortly after arrival at Camp Dwyer the RCT-5 Public Affairs Office will publish stories and photos detailing RCT-5's trip from sunny southern California to even sunnier southern Helmand Province. The two best places to see periodic coverage of events from the RCT-5 area of operations are the official RCT-5 Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RegimentalCombatTeam5) and the RCT-5 DVIDS page (<http://www.dvidshub.net/units/RCT5-MD>).

Congratulations to the following Marines on their promotions this month!

- Lt. Col. Timothy Bairstow
- Maj. Eric Landblom
- Capt. Terry Whitaker
- 1st Lt. Jayson Downing
- 1st Lt. Kyle Pubols
- 1st Lt. Lorenzo Trevino
- CWO4 Wesley Turner
- CWO2 Cory Gehring
- CWO2 Benjamin Scotece
- Sgt. Paul Bushnell
- Sgt. Kenneth Forehand Jr.
- Sgt. Curtis Hoffmann
- Sgt. Aaron Ieste Torres
- Cpl. Daniel Moyer
- Cpl. Ricky Pugh
- Cpl. Michael Saboe
- Cpl. Kurt Schierland
- Cpl. Brandon Woloschek
- Lance Cpl. Blaise Beesch
- Lance Cpl. Ricardo Medina-Ferrer
- Lance Cpl. Chase Owen
- Lance Cpl. Matthew Soderman
- Lance Cpl. James Turner III

FRO-Zone

"If it's from the from the FRO, you know it's so."

It is both dreaded and highly anticipated for Marines, Sailors and families alike. Anxiousness, anticipation, excitement, lingering denial, sadness, anger and even some resentment, restlessness, tension, guilt, relief, pride of duty – it's a wild and conflicting swirl of emotions. What's more – all of it is completely NORMAL. The social scientists and psychologists who study military families even have scientific reports to reassure us of that.

While you support your deployed member, there are services and programs available to support YOU. We encourage you to reach out to your local community – wherever you are – to discover what's out there. Our civilian communities across the country are extremely motivated to provide support. To learn more about military family outreach and support mechanisms that could be near you, use Military OneSource to locate them. To use their free online services, create a simple login at www.militaryonesource.com or call them at 800-342-9647 to speak to their consultants. If you have any connection to a military member, you are eligible for their services.

Likewise, our adoptive city, Dana Point, CA, has established a non-profit support group that directly benefits our Marines, Sailors and Families. RCT-5 and the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group have partnered for "Operation Joining Forces." Register your family for the program as a Military Partner to be matched with a Civilian Partner, a local family or citizen to receive deployment support - in whichever manner you establish together. Examples may be care packages to your Marine and your family, messages of encouragement, prayers, etc. For more information on that, see www.danapoint5thmarines.com and contact the Director of Support and Outreach, Ms. Terry Rifkin at (949) 412-3475 or terry@terryrifkin.com.

Program the Marine Corps' DSTRESS line into your phone – 877-476-7734 – and bookmark their website for a Live Chat session at www.dstressline.com. This is a 24-hour service that is entirely anonymous, but what sets it apart is that all counselors are retired or veteran Marines, Corpsmen or Marine-Navy family members who understand our culture so



there is no cause for further frustration to explain yourself to a civilian who will never really understand. I've tried them out myself, and feedback from other Marines is positive and even helps children and teens. Before you blow your top, get to feeling unbearably lonely, or prone to worry, please reach out to them. That's why they are there.

The RCT-5 Headquarters is a team working to support the operations of other subordinate units and work on a 24-hour, 7-day week schedule. Operations are happening all the time and our Marines and Sailors monitor, control, command, communicate and support those other units. RCT-5 has nearly five thousand personnel under its command. Depending on the role your Marine or Sailor has, it may take several weeks for them to establish a regular "battle rhythm" of working and personal hours. Access to and the type of personal communications is going to vary from one person to the next. We need our family members to be prepared to expect that and adjust their expectations accordingly, refraining from making comparisons to past experiences or the experiences of other RCT-5 families. There is free and commercial phone access where most of the RCT-5 personnel are working. Personal internet service is slow and not very private, but it is established with current efforts underway to improve it.

Your Marine or Sailor has trained and worked the length of their career to perform their duties wherever the nation calls them to go. The last several months have been especially intense for this particular mission and that intensity is reflected in personal and family lives. It is a sentiment felt all across the RCT-5 Family, no one is alone in this. Our journey begins....we'll be in touch!

Your FRO,

Kim Merkel

Marine Speak: FOB & TAD

FOB - Forward Operating Base

TAD - Temporary Assigned Duty. When a Marine or Sailor is assigned TAD to another location for more than 6 months their family is eligible to relocate.

(760)763-1253

Kimberly.Merkel@usmc.mil

The Chaplain's Corner

"Building Spiritual Resiliency"

As we begin what promises to be a long and challenging deployment, I know your hearts and prayers are turned toward our Marines and Sailors forward with RCT-5. I want to suggest a key to completing a successful deployment – both for our warriors and their loved ones – is spiritual resiliency. In the midst of trying times, spiritual resiliency puts us in God's hands, encourages hope for the future, and gives meaning to our trials. Daily prayer, becoming active in a supportive faith community, and regularly reading God's Word are all ways to build spiritual resiliency.

The Bible is no stranger to those who defend their nation at war. In particular, throughout history the Psalms have offered warriors and their families great strength and hope. This is because when we prayerfully read God's Word, we invite His grace, power and protection to enter into our lives. The Bible, though, hardly presents a sugarcoated view of life. God's Word is full of stories of people's trials, so it would be difficult to conclude we are somehow immune to life's challenges.



***"...spiritual resiliency
puts us in God's hands..."***

While in prison, the Apostle Paul wrote persecuted believers in Rome and penned some of the most encouraging words in Scripture: "...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Paul never claims we will avoid trials, persecution or failure. He does encourage us to rest in the knowledge that when the story of this tired old world is over, all things work together for good for: 1) those who love God and, 2) those who seek to work His will in their lives.

The point is, neither the final chapter of this world nor that of your life has been written. Until on that last day when all is accounted for – that is, your impact on this world and on those around you – we can't fully grasp this side of heaven how the details of our lives will fit into God's plan. But one thing is clear: God is just, God is good, God cares about you, and God will prevail. I frequently counsel our Marines that a good time to begin praying probably isn't in the middle of a battle. For them, the battle may be literal – for you, it may be fighting personal battles. But when you entrust yourself to God's love, He will begin to work his purposes in you. And as your faith begins to grow, you will begin to build spiritual resiliency that will carry you through this deployment and the rest of your life!



Lt. Cmdr. Winward is pictured here with his wife, KC, one of our RCT-5 Family Readiness Assistants.

***"The Bible is no stranger to
those who defend their nation
at war."***

Lt. Cmdr. Mark S. Winward is the RCT-5 Regimental Chaplain. He is available anytime for pastoral counseling or personal support by either contacting him in his office at 760-725-7330 or by cell phone at 760-468-3318.